



State of the City
February 7, 2011

The Town of Chauncey became the Town of West Lafayette in 1888 and the City of West Lafayette in 1924. Since that time, there have been many important changes, but the fundamental qualities of our City have remained the same.

Our hard working citizens have always relied on their government for safety and security. Our public safety personnel continue to do an excellent job despite decreasing revenues.

Under Police Chief Jason Dombkowski, a renewed sense of pride and professionalism keep at bay many of the threats facing the larger world. During 2010, crimes against persons decreased by 35% and calls for service increased by 11%. For the first time ever the total calls for service exceeded 20,000. Increased attention to alcohol awareness and education continue to keep our streets and citizens safer.

In its first full year of service, the Neighborhood Resource Team dealt with 142% more calls for assistance than the previous year in the areas of code enforcement, parking control and animal complaints. As planned, the NRT has been a boon to our neighborhoods.

School zone safety efforts resulted in almost 6 traffic contacts per day throughout the school year.

Our fire fighters had an active year with several significant fires. While many citizens were affected, fortunately none were injured and our emergency responders handled these difficult fire scenes with efficiency and professionalism. Overall, all incidents including medical runs, saw an increase of 3.5%. Led by Fire Chief Phil Drew, a long overdue open burning ordinance was passed in 2010 in order to manage and control outdoor burning and reduce the risk of dangerous and nuisance fires.

As shown admirably in the recent winter weather emergency, Dave Downey and the often overworked street department employees are also key players in keeping a safe city. In addition to millions of pounds of snow removed, hundreds of pot holes were filled and miles of streets were marked and swept clean regularly. Following a significant freak wind storm last spring, our hard-workers cleaned up a real mess in record time and with personalized, efficient service. Our once a week combined trash and recycling service has been universally acclaimed as a real improvement in citizen service. Further refinements in the service are expected to continue increases in our already record high recycling rate of 28%.

Having a beautiful, recreation-rich city has always been important. Our parks, recreation opportunities and trail system have always been a point of pride in West Lafayette. The Village Fitness Trail now connects neighborhoods, parks, the municipal pool, and the newly renovated community track at the high school. The Northwest Greenway Trail extension between US 52 and Yeager Road is now in full swing. Now underway is the Wabash Heritage Trail extension from North River Road to Happy Hollow Park to be completed this summer. Under Superintendent Joe Payne, Parks and Recreation runs the gamut from ice skating and swimming to adult softball and the Wabash Area Lifetime Learning Association. Thanks also to the Parks Board for all they do for our high quality of life.

Special events and activities abound. The 16th annual Global Fest enjoyed a record crowd. The sixth season for the Sagamore West Farmers' Market brought in record numbers. Numerous events filled Tapawingo Park to overflowing. The Purdue Crew Boathouse, including a community boat storage facility, opened another public access to the Wabash River. The Lilly Nature Center and the Celery Bog event, Mind BOGgling, encouraged connections with our native Hoosier natural beauty. The West Lafayette Community Gardens sprouted for the first time and the Tree City USA award was bestowed for the 19th time. Amid all this flourishing growth, longtime volunteer and community beautifier, Helen Lillich, was honored with the dedication of "Helen's Way," a new tree planting along Kalberer Road and the Northwest Greenway Trail. Thanks again, Helen.

As we look to the past to give honor, we must always look to the future to plan for the generations to come. One of the unsung heroes doing just that is our City Engineer, Dave Buck. What he is helping to design and implement now will serve our grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Thanks to funding from the Tippecanoe County Bridge Fund, Lindberg Bridge will soon create a permanent solution to traversing our celery bog. It will serve motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians and those who want just to gaze.

Cumberland Avenue's phase one was completed in October on-time and under budget. This project featured major safety improvements, sustainable practices for storm water, rain gardens, environmentally sensitive lighting and recycling of construction materials. The modern roundabout at Kent and Cumberland has proved to be all that was hoped and none that was feared. Cumberland Avenue phase two will begin this year.

The Sycamore Lane traffic calming project is completed and was paid for with 90% federal safety funds. This project increased safety, ADA accessibility and reduced traffic speed and pavement coverage.

Yeager Road has needed an upgrade for a long time. Utility work will begin this summer and when completed with 80% federal funding, the street will be widened to 5 lanes with a roundabout to keep traffic flowing at Northwestern Avenue.

I believe Salisbury Street is the single route through our City that best shows the beauty and diversity of our neighborhoods from south to north. This iconic street is nearly fully reconstructed. The final section from Rainbow Drive to US 52 will be designed this year.

Everywhere you look, streets, sidewalks and ADA ramps are receiving needed repairs. In the last 4 years, \$2.3 million has been invested all over town. We are fortunate to have the Engineer's Department planning and improving for us and the generations to come.

The GoGreener Commission has been an active partner in educating, studying and implementing environmentally sound policies in improving water quality specifically and green policies in general; but being green is not a new concept in West Lafayette. Over many years our Wastewater Treatment Facility has been a leader in performance and innovation. Renewed attention to a comprehensive environmental plan for our City's utility has been the brainchild of Wastewater Superintendent Dave Henderson. From sweeping streets to enhanced trash/recycling to using grease and food waste to generate power, every detail matters in keeping our City clean and moving toward sustainability. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management is a welcome partner in our efforts and we were pleased to be recognized as a CLEAN Community in the CLEAN Communities program.

Producing 15% of the total power used at our wastewater plant from waste material is a marvelous innovation. Less cost to the rate payers and fewer trips to the landfill just make good sense. Our Wastewater utility is well run, solidly financed and comprehensively keeping our environment clean. My thanks to the Board of Works members who oversee this important City function.

Growth and development has always been critical in our City's prosperity. Development Director Chandler Poole has left no stone unturned in seeking investment in our community. As a player on the national and international stage, our partnerships with Purdue University and Purdue Research Foundation are invaluable.

Cornerstone Autism Centers will be serving a tremendous cause and bringing 25 new jobs to PRF in West Lafayette this year. Dow AgroSciences has expanded further at PRF with the construction of a state of the art greenhouse to be used for research. More good prospects with additional jobs are in the works. Working with the Area Plan Commission, the City has been involved in creating a commercial master plan for the US 52/Sagamore Parkway area.

The former Kmart site was purchased by a local developer and the City is working to insure the best possible re-use of this important gateway site to our community.

The City's Strategic Plan is being updated by numerous meetings with individuals and groups to insure that it is a working plan for our entire community.

Our visibility as a thriving place-to-be has been increased by numerous efforts. The City website has professionally produced community videos online. The world of social media has a new entrant as the City is now on Facebook and Twitter and the Farmers' Market has its own Facebook page. The "Tour de West Lafayette" was a smashing success featuring historic neighborhood based videos.

Our partnerships with Purdue continue to succeed: organizing "Meet and Greet" to welcome incoming students; chairing the West Lafayette Community Partnership Team; participating in the Campus Community Bar and Retail Committee; partnering with Purdue Convocations and Purdue Galleries to promote the arts.

Over 3,100 persons benefited from CDBG funding in support services for the homeless, elderly, victims of domestic violence and attainment of self-sufficiency. New Chauncey Housing received assistance in its mission to stabilize neighborhoods. NCHI worked on 14 projects including 3 purchases and 4 sales.

The Rental Housing Program works closely with the Neighborhood Resource Team to help neighborhoods combat code violations and educate residents about improving the area they live in.

Less visible, but critically important, is the financial backing for many efforts city-wide which are assisted by the Department of Development and authorized by the Redevelopment Commission. Funding last year included: major road construction; trails; parking garage; streetscape improvements; attracting new jobs and redeveloping vacant properties. With a steady flow of TIF funding, many projects and important services become reality.

We in city government operate in challenging financial times. Traditional funding sources are shrinking permanently while equally permanent cost increases create an ever tightening vice on finances. We must continue to serve our citizens well, and that takes creativity and solid long-term planning. Old solutions will not always solve new problems. As partners in solving these challenges, I will rely on my fellow elected officials on the Council to work with me as we lead our City through financial uncertainty in the future.

Knowing what challenges were on the horizon, our Clerk-Treasurer Judy Rhodes has been proactive and creative over the last few years to prepare as well as possible.

I am pleased to report that our financial health is now in an excellent position as we face the substantial financial challenges which are sure to come.

We begin 2011 with the smallest budget in four years. The 2011 City budget is \$2.7 million lower than the budget when I began as Mayor. This 14% decrease, despite increasing costs, is a testament to careful planning and frugality across all City departments. Keeping citizen services our first and most important goal makes this accomplishment even more noteworthy.

Reversing a dangerous prior trend, our cash reserves are now 24% of our general fund budget. This is twice as much as in 2008. This is a crucial safety net for our City finances and has not gone unnoticed by the financial markets. In a world of shrinking City revenues and contrary to all trends, our City bond rating increased in 2010 from AA minus to AA. Standard & Poor's cited our "very strong general fund reserves" as one reason for the improved rating. Our financial strength and bond rating increase netted us \$131,000 in savings when the Parking Garage bonds were refinanced.

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From citizen service to financial strength, from neighborhood vigor to development progress, I am pleased to report that the State of the City of West Lafayette is very good. I thank the citizens, the city employees and you, the members of the Common Council for your optimism, hard work and devotion to the City.

I am very proud to serve as Mayor and look forward to the year ahead

Mayor John Dennis